DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 131 423 CS 003 023

AUTHOR Hellman, Sally G.
TITLE Finding Methods and Materials That Work for Problem Readers.
PUB DATE 76
NOTE 7p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elective Subjects; Individualized Instruction; Program Descriptions; Reading Instruction; *Reading Materials; *Remedial Reading; Remedial Reading Programs; Secondary Education; Teaching Assistants; *Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

A successful remedial reading program in a three-year high school in Las Vegas consists of small, separate, elective reading classes for which students receive credit and in which students are taught by a qualified reading specialist aided by trained assistants. This program uses placement tests and diagnostic tests to prescribe specific remediation for each student and relies on individualized attention, varied materials, and a balance between skill development and reading for comprehension improvement and enjoyment. (A list of references is included.) (JM)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED131423

Sally G. Hellman
3338 Ayita Circle
Las Vegas, Nevada 89109

About 1,050 words
plus references

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Sally G. Hellman

TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER.

FINDING METHODS AND MATERIALS THAT WORK FOR PROBLEM READERS

by

Sally G. Hellman

John Harker's article, "Materials for Problem Readers" in the March, 1975 Journal of Reading was of special interest to me. Due to my involvement this year in a Title I Reading Program on the secondary level, I found many of the same problems in my classroom which Mr. Harker discusses in his article.

I am in agreement with several of Mr. Harker's points, especially his conclusion that, without an improvement in the basic reading skills of the student, improvement in his motivation to read will not be sufficient help to the student.

However, I must take exception to his statement regarding the preparation of secondary teachers for the teaching of reading skills. Perhaps his experiences have

put him into contact only with English teachers who have been given the added job of teaching remedial or developmental reading programs and therefore are neither trained in nor perceptive to the particular problems of the secondary student who is a poor reader. This is not the case in the program with which I am presently involved.

The three-year high school where I teach has approximately 300 students who have remedial reading problems serious enough to need special help (approximately 90% are Stanine 1). My students are a heterogeneous mix of 10th, 11th and 12th graders, many of whom have been in remedial reading programs since elementary school; fifteen of my students are in need of English as a Second Language.

Due to the special guideline of our Title I program, I have a teaching load of only 60 students, divided into six classes per day. In the classroom, I have the assistance of two well-trained and well-qualified teacher aides, and the part-time help of a family aide in the classroom.

One of the basic premises of our program was the idea that if one could determine the specific skill deficiencies of each student, we could prescribe specific remediation. In order to determine these needs, a placement test and diagnostic tests (developed by the local school district and keyed to the district reading guide) were administered to each student. In addition, an oral reading inventory and basic sight word tests were administered to obtain the

approximate reading grade level of each student The CAT Test, Level 5, in Vocabulary and Comprehension was used as an overall pre-test of grade level reading ability.

Armed with this information, it was possible to plan an individualized program of instruction for each student, and then group students into a small, large or one-to-one situation for instruction. The skill deficiencies had a very wide range, as did the reading grade level, from one to eight.

Our next problem was to find materials suitable for remediating these deficiencies. Since most of the students, as previously mentioned, had been in remedial programs before, they had already been subjected to most of the skill building sets and workbooks such as SRA, Sullivan Readers and Better Reading, and wanted nothing more to do with them.

We decided not to buy sets, kits or entire programs of material if we could avoid it. We did purchase approximately 400 paperbacks from Scholastic, Bantam, etc., on as wide a variety of subjects as possible. We ordered daily newspapers for the classroom. Current magazines were donated by students, teachers and the local post-office. We bought the Reader's Digest Skill Builders and Advanced Skill Builders with cassettes. The Barnell Lofts Specific Skills series was one set we did borrow, since it covered needed skills on grade levels 1-7. The EDL/McGraw-Hill Aud-X machine and the workbooks for this program were

ordered, primarily for use by the ESL students, although the Word Attack Review (DEFA) is extremely helpful for all secondary students.

Since there was quite a time lag before materials arrived, we had to create and use borrowed materials and ideas for the first part of the semester. For skill review work, we used several Spirit-Duplicating books from the Word Wizard Series, 1 and 3, the Study Skills Series published by Hayes, and the Phonics Series, 6th Grade Level by Gel-Sten Supply Company.

Using these materials to start with, we proceeded through the first semester with varying degrees of success and failure. We found that most of the students had extremely poor vocabularies, poor study habits, and a poor attitude towards themselves and their abilities. In view of this, most self-directed assignments had to be almost completely abandoned and various small and large group activities substituted. Book reports, written and oral, play reading, poetry reading, spelling and word games, and charades were popular activities for the students. The students' writing assignments opened up many areas for individualized remedial instruction.

At the end of the semester, when the CAT Test was administered, the smallest gain in general reading was five months and the greatest four years. There were also three or four students who showed drops in overall scores of from three to six months.

What worked and what did not is hard to identify. The individualized attention, the varied activities, the competent staff and the varied materials all must take their fair share of the credit. A balance between skill development and reading for comprehension improvement and enjoyment were important. Small classes were certainly a big asset to whatever success we had with the program.

Since we were a separate reading class and were not charged with teaching literature as part of our program, we may have avoided the sin of alienating students from literature which Mr. Harker mentions. No onus was placed on the student for being in the class, because it was an elective subject for which he received credit. Certainly, qualified and experienced teachers are the biggest asset any reading program can have at the present time. Reading specialists will continue to be a part of the school picture, until every teacher once again considers himself a teacher of reading, and skill is made a part of every teaching discipline.

References

Bantam Books, Inc., Educational Division, New York, N.Y.

EDL/McGraw-Hill Aud-X Program, Los Angeles, California.

Harker, W. Jolen, "Materials for Problem Readers: Why Aren't They Working?" Journal of Reading, XVIII (March, 1975), 451-454.

Phonics Series, 6th Grade Level, Bel-Sten Supply Co., Los Angeles, California.

Reader's Digest New Advanced Reading Skill Builders, 1-2-3, Reader's Digest Services, Inc., Pleasantville, N.Y.

Reader's Digest New Readers Skill Builders, Parts 4-6, Reader's Digest Services, Inc., Pleasantville, N.Y.

Scholastic Book Series, New York, N.Y.

Specific Skill Series, Richard A. Bolling, Barnell Loft, Ltd., Baldwin, N.Y.

Study Skills Series, Hayes School Publishing Co., Wilkensburg, Pa.

Word Wizards 1 & 3, Hayes School Publishing Co., Wilkensburg, Pa.